Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno, and Contemporary South African History

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that modern views and practices about democracy are incongruent – both in and out of South Africa – to *enlightened* principles. Un-enlightened behaviour manifests itself in all spheres of society at the expense of the individual and results in a society of the Other. Of particular interest is the disillusionment with democracy, the seamless relationship between 'governing' and business, and that the political elite undermine democratic ideals – their rhetoric makes an enlightened society pure myth. Democracy is devouring itself. History as critical social theory has a role to play in creating a culture of neo-*enlightenedness* as it exposes the increasing ANCification of South African society – a state at the point of failing.

1. Introduction

> 'To be able to anticipate the future, it is necessary to try to understand the past …. Of course, the 'past' is interpreted selectively in everyone's imagination of it.'[1]

This truism is of relevance for the aims of this article, *viz.* to propose some areas for future research of South African history against the background of the growing volume of Critical Theory literature in almost all social sciences. Many observers have captured South Africa's unique socio-political history in some form of concise wisdom, but for the purpose herein, Herman Giliomee's 'two revolutions' hypothesis, namely the implementation of apartheid, and secondly, the handing over of power[2] in the 1990s, resonates well with our *enlightenment* critique.

The first objective was to arrive at a general understanding of the concept *enlightenment.* The second was to gain insight into aspects thereof according to Max Horkeimer and Theodor

[1] Legassick, M. *Towards Socialist Democracy,* p.(xvii). See also Dreyer, P.S. *Inleiding tot die Filosofie van die Geskiedenis,* p.1.
[2] Giliomee, H. *Die Laaste Afrikaner-leiers. 'n Opperste Toets van Mag,* p.11.

Adorno's views in their joint publication *Dialectic of Enlightenment* of the mid-1940s and most of Horkheimer's available in English. In order to do so, particular attention was paid to the position of the individual – a central theme in Horkheimer's thinking. Thirdly, a few observations were made about the relevance of *enlightenment* and Critical Theory[3] in contemporary South African context. It suggests how enlightened (or not), our post-1994 society is. These few hints are, at best, only suggestions for empirical testing.[4] Because of their provisional status, they were merely stated and not discussed in any detail – some referred to, are processes still running its course.

Horkheimer and Adorno claimed that they set out to find '… why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism'.[5] Throughout *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (and in other writings of particularly Horkheimer), there are many direct and indirect references to 'barbarism,' and it is therefore appropriate at the outset, to comment on them. The use of the words 'barbarian' or 'barbarism' in the early writings (of, not only historians), had a derogatory (but not exclusively such) connotation. For instance, in his comparative study between the United States of America and South Africa about frontier and religion, Boucher stated: 'The manner in which the religious factor prevented a relapse into barbarism is central to this thesis.'[6] As a further example, South African historian Ken Smith, referred to G.M. Theal who saw the coloured races of South Africa as '… fickle barbarians, prone to robbery and unscrupulous in shedding blood".[7] At the other side of the political spectrum, I.B. Tabata, former leader of the Non-European Unity Movement,[8] castigated H.F. Verwoerd's educational policies of the 1950s as being '… education for barbarism.'[9] Our concluding remarks indicate that some aspects of such prejudices are still prevailing in post-1994 South Africa (and into 2014), albeit in new manifestations.

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[3] Gunn, R. and A. Wilding. 'Is The Frankfurt School Still Relevant?'Heathwood Institute and Press. <www.heathwoodpress.com/is-the-frankfurt-school-still-relevant/> Posted on 14 April 2014; Smith, R. C. 'On Max Horkheimer and the Challenge of Critical Theory.' Heathwood Institute and Press. <www/heathwoodpress.com/max-horkheimer-and-the-definition-of-critical-theory> Posted on 13 May 2013.

[4] Engelbrecht, C. 'Limitations in History.' Part II. 'Theory and Eastern Cape Historical Research.' <independent.academia.edu.christoenapers> Posted on 26 December 2012, pp.1-12.

[5] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* (Preface, 1944 and 1947), p.(xiv).

[6] Boucher, M. 'The Frontier and Religion. A Comparative Study of the United States of America and South Africa in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century', in *Archives Year Book for South African History*. Thirty-first Year, Vol.II, p.(xiii).

[7] Smith, K. *The Changing Past. Trends in South African Historical Writing,* p. 37. See also his footnote 65 on p.224.

[8] Gevisser, M. *The Dream Deferred. Thabo Mbeki*, pp.75, 80-82, 95-98, 366; Hirson, B. 'A Short History of the Non-European Unity Movement. An Insider's View.' <www.sahistory.org.za/organisations/non_european_unity_movement_neum?>, p.1.

[9] Giliomee, H. *Die Laaste Afrikaner-leiers. 'n Opperste Toets van Mag,* p.82.

Dialectic of Enlightenment was written at a time when (fortunately) the end of National Socialist debacles was eminent. Civic life between the two World Wars, as well as the direct consequences of both for Germany, present the background for the topic of 'barbarism' as Horkheimer and Adorno experienced it in their daily lives and when they wrote about it. According to them, before true human freedom could be achieved, all forms of terror (including the renewed rise of totalitarianism – e.g. Nazism, fascism, Stalinism) and power domination that continue to perpetrate socio-economic injustices,[10] needed to be eradicated from an un-enlightened society. For instance, dictators and wars threatened all forms of human freedom. Not only for them, the humiliation of prisoners in concentration camps[11] without any rational justification, are to this day, examples found in numerous countries across the world. Post-colonial human rights malpractices in Africa, are today little to be proud of. Similarly, the South African press regularly report on appalling prison conditions and inhumane prisoner treatment in the South African 'correctional' system. Further examples of an un-enlightened society, for Horkheimer, were the destructive results of modern mass communication – meaning the '… machinery of mass opinion …[12] – that served as a tool to dominate the masses because of its close link to rational justification in the service of bourgeois behaviour. These phenomena were so interrelated according to Horkheimer and Adorno that unrestrained power propaganda turned e.g. even language into an instrument[13] of power. The result was loss of human identity[14] and each person simply remained connected to his/her economic doom[15] under new hegemonic conditions. In addition, when masses of people lived under circumstances of uncontrollable and unjustified levels of e.g. hyper-inflation[16] and the hopeless rise in the cost of the living standards of particularly the lower classes,[17] which clearly showed how modern society's so-called 'enlightened' humane ideas were failing.[18] Such are the contradictions of bourgeois capitalist culture – where 'democracy' as ideology, is failing; where the struggle for 'equality' and 'freedom' is nothing more than serving self-interest of the privileged; and where 'governing' equates to fraudulent access to the taxpayers' money by the 'governing' elite. Ours is no mere critique of current South African life, but real conditions, or at least, empirical truths.

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[10] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.181.
[11] Ibid., p.196. Also refer to the literature surrounding this topic relating to the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.
[12] Horkheimer, M. *Critique of Instrumental Reason. Lectures and Essays Since the End of World War II*, p.26.
[13] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.212.
[14] Ibid., p.204.
[15] Ibid., p.175.
[16] Ibid., p.182.
[17] Ibid., p.(xvii).
[18] Ibid., p.186.

The above (and other contemporary efforts) to construct a global history of *enlightenment*, will show that human misery at the hands of reason, includes e.g. xenophobia;[19] continued division of labour; and capitalist exploitive domination by the bourgeoisie – even when considering e.g. the philosophy and practices of modern immigration regulations in EU countries. The latter can, in the Lefebvreian sense of the word, be interpreted as the institutionalisation of contesting space.[20] An example is land 'reform' in South Africa. In addition, official science, so dependent on reason, they wrote, was mere ideology[21] and lapses of *enlightenment* were evident in the work of logical positivism because of the narrow application of rational reasoning.[22]

Horkheimer's writings are full of references to the dichotomy between technology and apparent human 'progress' which were in close proximity to irrational barbaric practices in capitalist and non-capitalist worlds alike. In the latter instance, Horkheimer frequently referred to the East in his post-1945 writings in order to draw attention to the failing philosophies, political practices, and material conditions of the average citizen there. Such 'blinkered' reasoning gave rise to practical and theoretical tendencies that sponsored our self-destruction of nature,[23] in human relationships, and the human collective – specifically, when the individual is forced into mass conformity. Contemporary self-deception of the masses, namely, that *enlightenment* is hailed as 'progress,' confirms that human reason contributes little or nothing positive under such circumstances to enlightened human behaviour, but simply enhances fixed and severely restricted conceptual relationships[24] in (and about) modern society. Horkheimer used the term 'rationalized horror'[25] on more than just a few occasions to describe the status quo – a state of self-deception, alienation and destruction. Reason, previously considered as fundamental to *enlightenment*, seemed to be its own worst enemy. Not surprisingly, Horkheimer published his views of '… the concept of rationality that underlies our contemporary industrial culture, in order to discover whether this concept does not contain defects that vitiate it essentially'[26] as a critique of the current (Spring 1944) hopeless state of affairs. In a three line letter (of only 25 words) to Horkheimer, his friend Herbert Marcuse, wrote in January 1973 (shortly before Horkheimer's death), that they lived

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[19] Ibid., pp.196; 204; 183.
[20] Lefebvre. H. *The Production of Space.*
[21] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.(xiv).
[22] See for instance, Vrahimis, A.S. *Relativism as Against Positivism in the Interpretation of History.* Unpublished MA. Thesis, University of the Free State.
[23] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.(xvii); 2, 5, 9.
[24] Ibid., p.64.
[25] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence,* pp.61-62.
[26] Horkheimer, M. *Eclipse of Reason,* p.(v).

in an increasing terrible world – one '… beyond our capacity of imagination'.[27] *Enlightenment* for them, did not exclude myth.

The conclusion of this study indicates that some of the above issues (and other) are recognisable in the post-1994 South African society, because despite our 'enlightened' constitution, the material conditions of all our citizenry have by 2014, in many respects, not improved substantially. For instance, based on empirical research, South African historian Martin Legassick (and numerous subsequent findings) argued that the rich got richer and the poor became poorer.[28] This position is not unique to South Africa. Böröcz underlined the necessity to redistribute inequality in the world's worst distressed communities; to eradicate absolute poverty and raise mean income levels; to eradicate and rethink the unmanageable proportions of quality of life and to come up with corruption-proof methodologies for raising the living standards in the peripheries.[29] Adorno wrote in a similar vein in the 1944 'Preface' to their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, about the '… socially paltry rise in the standard of living of the lower classes….'[30] Böröcz also questioned whether the class/status analysis suffices to give a satisfactory interpretation of society. For instance, the real dangers of social closure – the practice '… where one group monopolizes advantages by closing of opportunities to another group …'[31] needs re-consideration in the post-1994 South African context. But benefitting from hindsight, enlightenment is not measured in material terms only.[32] For instance, since reversed racism is widely experienced and discussed in the public domain such *anti*-enlightened material position necessitates a brief look into what real *enlightenment* is.

2. The Enlightenment era

Historians accept that no generalization on its own will be adequate as an explanatory model in order to make a research project clear – but generalizations nevertheless remain an integral part of the historical method. Generally stated, the Enlightenment era was fundamentally a 17th and 18th century European intellectual movement. Although widely and unevenly distributed, the Enlightenment comprised of numerous diverse phenomena, events, and with its own institutions. Despite the fact that the boundaries between them might seem indistinct,

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[27] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence,* p.374.
[28] Legassick, M. *Towards Socialist Democracy,* p.441. See also Boraine, A. *What's Gone Wrong? On the Brink of a Failed State,* pp.1-9.
[29] Böröcz, J. 'Redistributing Global Inequality. A Thought Experiment', in *Economic and Political Weekly,* 26 February 2005, pp.887-891.
[30] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.(xvii).
[31] Böröcz, J. 'Stand Reconstructed: Contingent Closure and Institutional Change', in *Sociological Theory,* Vol.15, No.3, Nov.1997, pp.215-216, 222.
[32] Jay, M. *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950,* p.256.

and that there is also no agreement on the finer detail of them, there still remains a clear nucleus of characteristics that can be regarded as diverse phenomena that describe the Enlightenment.

Whilst some critics maintained that the legacy of the Enlightenment needed to be protected against various forms of neo-barbarian decay, others argued that most 20th century disasters stemmed from this era.[33] On a positive note, when Enlightenment thinkers usually referred to *man*, or *mankind*, they implied *all* people. They endeavoured to rationally instruct (or inform) fellow citizens, and emphasised the understanding of spiritual insight. They focused and relied on reason and individualism, rather than on the traditional beliefs.

It is clear from the above that an obvious and generally acceptable definition of the Enlightenment will not be possible – it might even be unwise. For instance, Immanuel Kant described the Enlightenment '… as man's release from self-incurred tutelage …'[34] – and that the goal of *enlightenment* was intellectual freedom. In order to achieve such, people needed to be liberated from oppressive authority in order to make unrestrained choices. Enlightened search for intellectual freedom was therefore a moral one. Consequently, we should be free from any kind of restrictions to be able to argue with (and against) authority; be free to make public use of our reason at every moment; to challenge orthodoxy, and have the understanding of the limits of our own reason. For the above (and other) reasons, I will follow O'Hara's key characteristics of the Enlightenment process as an appropriate framework for analysis.

Characteristically of the Enlightenment was the appearance of new sources of authority – in particular, those that pertained to human capacities. There was a broad and general shift away from traditional authority towards greater autonomy of the individual. Traditional sources of authority, e.g. the king, God and the Bible, lost their once firm grip on society. Instead, human direct observation about life became prominent whilst human reason and logic grew in importance. The result was a sense of modernisation, greater tolerance in society, and increased desire for individual liberty. For instance, Thomas Paine's popular *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason* widely advocated and developed the ideals of the Enlightenment and were at the same time also regarded as products thereof.

The second characteristic refers to greater human confidence and optimism – this was true in respect of human powers to control their natural world. The constraints of nature could be tamed by commerce and science. For instance, new modes of transport and communication systems, agriculture, gardening, etc., confirmed mankind's ability to be in charge of his/her life. In addition, confidence about human progress, further stimulated optimism about our productive abilities. Because of the ever-growing spread of greater scientific application,

[33] O'Hara, K. *The Enlightenment,* pp.(vii), 1-3.
[34] Ibid., p.1.

precision became important because tools, new instruments, and measurements became increasingly accurate and more sophisticated.

Thirdly, increased secularization and a sense of optimism, sceptically questioned old orthodoxies. Unfashionable mysteries and rituals of e.g. the Church, old medical practices, and conservative political beliefs made way for new ones. Radicalism and single-minded confidence of e.g. the French revolutionaries concerned many of the great philosophical minds. Top-down solutions to social problems were questioned. Scepticism and moderation towards theory were no longer appropriate in the short term, as confident radical theorists presented new alternatives. As a result, philosophers and inventors of the Industrial Revolution influenced societies (unevenly) across the globe[35] as the world became smaller.

Individuals increasingly needed the ability to find things out for themselves in (and about) their world. The desire was to arrive at independent/personal conclusions about questions they posed for themselves. In the forth instance, universal reason probed humankind's ability to seek out new truths that were based on explicit factual evidence.[36] Religion was subjected to rational scrutiny, and global conscience about our position and place in the world, found their ways onto new discourse agendas.

Furthermore, self-interest, human happiness and the good of human nature were pursuits that followed the rise of mankind's individualism (a theme, we will see later herein, that was uppermost in Horkheimer's mind). The constructive attitude towards personal good, rights to life, liberty and happiness were openly discussed and wrote about. Self-interest was no longer seen as being disparaging of social harmony at the expense of the Other.

Attitudes of an educated minority still regulated the 'noble savage'. For instance, philosopher and mathematician Condorcet, showed how trade restrictions, monopolies, racism, etc., have destroyed human goodwill. He expressed the hope that colonies will not subject their inhabitants through these methods. But the Enlightenment was still a top-down movement with attitudes of a largely educated minority – e.g. money, political power, education, religious disposition, and other forms of elitism, characterised his society.[37]

Lastly, the Age of Enlightenment was marked by dynastic power politics, optimistic humanism and the confident synthesis of thoughts of e.g. Locke, Newton and Voltaire. Enlightenment thinkers tried to apply the principles of reason of e.g. Newton to the problems of their day. Voltaire laboured to rationalize religion; David Hume rejected deism as rationally unverifiable, whilst Adam Smith was deeply hostile to widespread policies of government regulation and protective tariffs – economics was to be left to function without

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[35] Engelbrecht, C. Globalization theory and reference to aspects of Eastern Cape (South Africa) history. <http://africalit.nai.uu.se/exlibris/aleph/a18> Posted on 21 May 2011, pp.1-10.

[36] Engelbrecht, C. 'Limitations in History.' Part 1. 'Problems with Historical Facts.' <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> Posted on 7 June 2013, pp.1-12.

[37] O'Hara, K. *The Enlightenment,* pp.3-14.

regulatory interferences. Reason, many philosophers thought, would open the way for a better world.[38]

In short, a number of long-standing ideas and beliefs were overthrown and replaced, but in essence, Enlightenment thinkers combined empirical research with achievements of natural sciences. They were practical and change-orientated philosophers.[39] The Enlightenment era was characterized by the rise of public property acquired, and resisted high taxation. Spirited progress was made in music, performing arts, painting and architecture in critically assessing the social conditions of their time.[40]

In the early 20th century however, critical theorists would challenge this so-called 'enlightened' situation. The belief that the Enlightenment opened up new possibilities for empirical science and technology that resulted in far-reaching advances in material life would not go unquestioned. It was this wide-spread self-destruction of *enlightenment* that '… relapses into mythology …'[41] that was at the core of Horkheimer and Adorno's study of 'enlightenment'.

3. *Enlightenment* according to critical theorists, Horkheimer and Adorno

From the early 1920s the founders of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt, continued to add new dimensions to the *enlightenment* concept. For Horkheimer, *enlightenment* was part of a more comprehensive process of domination. Taken as a whole, his general interpretation of *enlightenment* was the re-thinking of the '… liberal-democratic political tradition'[42] because the categorical ideals of the bourgeois civic life gave rise to higher and unnecessary levels of surplus suffering.[43] So, Horkheimer's affinity for the French Enlightenment stems from his belief that it exposes social two-facedness and societal injustices. Thus the role of rationalism and the influence of the state do not stand separate from the Enlightenment ideal of liberating humankind from all forms of fear and to establish his position of sovereignty.[44]

Firstly, Horkheimer and Adorno wrote *Dialectics of Enlightenment* together, and although some chapters belong to the one and not the other, they nevertheless took co-responsibility for

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[38] Hollister, C.W. (ed.) *Landmarks of the Western Heritage.* Vol.1. *The Ancient Near East to 1789,* pp.473-474.
[39] Ritzer, G. and D.J. Goodman. *Sociological Theory,* pp.10-11.
[40] Wells, H.G. *The Outline of History, Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind from Primordial Life to Nineteen Sixty*, pp.797-827.
[41] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.(xvi).
[42] Jay, M. *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950*, pp.11, 15.
[43] Ibid., pp.103, 160.
[44] Wiggerhaus, R. *The Frankfurt School. Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, pp.326-329; Abromeit, J. *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School*, pp.10-11.

every sentence therein.[45] Secondly, this work was published in 1944 during World War IIs catastrophic circumstances, hence its confrontational (even negative or pessimistic) tone and manner is not surprising. Understandably, their book '… was shaped by the social conditions in which it was written …'[46] they conceded. At the time of publication, this now acclaimed work was an important contribution to the Frankfurt School's philosophical literature. In fact, at some stage the book was described as '… undoubtedly the most influential publication of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School',[47] although not all commentators shared this view.[48]

In the 1944 (and 1947) Preface, Horkheimer and Adorno indicted that they set out '… to explain why humanity instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism'.[49] Almost twenty years later, in the Preface to the Italian edition of 1962 (and 1966), they elaborated that the German text that they began writing in 1942, '… was supposed to form the introduction to the theory of society and history'.[50] Finally, in the Preface to the new edition of 1969, they wrote that '[c]ritical thought, which does not call a halt before progress itself, require us to take up the cause of the remnants of freedom, of tendencies toward real humanity'.[51]

These three positions are important, because they provided the broad framework for their thinking, in at least three senses: firstly, they claimed that society was drifting (relapsing) towards new forms of barbarism; in the second, they claimed to have commenced with a theory of society and history; in the third, they applied critical thinking in their work to establish a better world. Not surprisingly, Jürgen Habermas (a former student of Adorno) made the same points in the early 1970s in his study *Theory and Practice.*[52]

Three important considerations can be brought up: despite the objectives set out as indicated above over time by Horkeimer and Adorno, their concept of history did not elevate history 'above' history itself; secondly, they were too aware to not merely search for information in the positivist tradition; and lastly, their critique of philosophy did not seek to negate philosophy.[53] In time, these three considerations together became closely related to the

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[45] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*, pp.219-220.
[46] Ibid., p.(xiii).
[47] Ibid., p.217.
[48] Schmidt, J. "Language, Mythology, and Enlightenment: Historical Notes on Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment"*.' <https//www.academia.edu/1492339/Cultural_Change_and_Diffusion-Geographical –Patterns_Social_Processes_and_Contact_Zones>, pp.3-4.
[49] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.(xiv).
[50] Ibid., p.(xiii).
[51] Ibid., p.(xi).
[52] Habermas, J. *Theory and Practice*, passim.
[53] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.(xii).

application of the concept *praxis*, which in turn, manifested itself as an important tool in Critical Theory's treatment of the Habermassian 'history with practical intent'.

Horkheimer and Adorno *defined enlightenment* to be '… the advance[ment] of thought'.[54] The *aims* of *enlightenment*, they continued, were '… liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters …'[55] of their own destiny, whilst the *program* of *enlightenment* '… was the disenchantment of the world …'[56] that wanted '… to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge….'[57] These three elements, the definition, the aims, and the program of *enlightenment*, combined, make up the framework for the presentation below.

For Horkheimer and Adorno, human freedom in society was inseparable from *enlightenment* thinking, therefore the cryptic treatment thereof at this point. Self-confident and opinionated Horkheimer placed a high premium on the individual and reason. In the mid-1920s he referred to people who had views about others.[58] Horkheimer must have included himself as having had an opinion about others, because, for instance, in a letter to Rosa Riekher and Friedrich Pollock, he was very critical of characters in *Madame Bovary*[59] and gave an opinionated critique thereof. Also, in his first meeting with Professor Schumann of the psychological institute '… I all too clearly pointed out his nonsense to him….'[60] Likewise, in their first meeting Horkheimer also had a fall-out with Professor Hans Cornelius '… giving him a detailed lesson about some basic philosophical questions….'[61] There are a few other instances of this kind – suffice to say that Horkheimer was vocal about his own intellectual abilities and did not hesitate to speak his mind. Often, the tone and manner in which he did so, was offensive.

From an early age Horkheimer believed that the individual of his time has advanced tremendously – for instance, human output (meaning productive/manufacturing capacity) was at an unprecedented high.[62] Yet, for the sake of material advancement in life '… the exploiting individual …'[63] as member of the ruling class, propped up a bad society – the result: society depended on the vile reliability of the individual.[64] Even when fighting against individualism, that the individual sacrificed himself for the good of the whole, such ideal '… fits in perfectly with the current situation'[65] in which Horkheimer wrote. Dialectically

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[54] Ibid., p.1.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Horkheimer. M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969,* p.17
[59] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence,* pp.8 ff.
[60] Ibid., p.18.
[61] Ibid., p.20.
[62] Horkheimer. M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969,* p.19.
[63] Ibid., p.21.
[64] Ibid., p.30.
[65] Ibid., p.37.

speaking, the hero did not necessarily serve the good of all – such individual cannot guarantee individualism, because present society was one of standardisation and mass culture.[66] In other words, '[e]ven the actions of great men are determined by their individual aims.'[67] Instead, and in an optimistic spirit, Horkheimer wrote that 'socialism, on the other hand, is the development of individual talents and differences'.[68] But the present situation did not reflect this, instead, '… the limitations on individual freedom […] is immeasurably greater than would be necessary …'[69] For instance, the value of material goods is not determined by the individual, but by the market.[70] In this sense the individual's freedom and his/her position as such, are superseded since the value of an individual depends on the exchange mechanism of society.[71] Even social space of the individual, was, for Horkheimer, determined by power – in many instances armed might[72] is symptomatic in bourgeois society. Consequently, the individual had no place to hide and only the powerful few (bourgeois individuals) could enjoy life's pleasures.[73]

Horkheimer's inaugural lecture of 24 January 1931 provides further information about his views of the individual. The basis for this view stemmed from the future role of social philosophy being the '… philosophical interpretations of the vicissitudes of human fate – the fate of humans not as mere individuals, however, but as members of a community'.[74] Horkheimer also discussed Hegel's '… metaphysics of objective Spirit […] in an optimistic, individualistic society by the direct belief in the prestabilized harmony of individual interests'.[75] For Horkheimer, '… social philosophy is confronted with the yearning for a new interpretation of a life trapped in its individual striving for happiness'.[76] Significantly, and despite the Institute's Marxist image, it would by the mid-1930s not seek its 'happiness' in Russia.[77]

Horkheimer's interest in psychology and its relation to history also discussed the position of the individual. The individual's function in the production process '… is determined by the individual's fate in a family; by the effects of socialization, and how the labour of an

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[66] Ibid., p.47.
[67] Horkheimer, M. 'The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Science', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings,* p.3.
[68] Horkheimer. M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969,* p.47.
[69] Ibid., p.51.
[70] Ibid., p.69.
[71] Ibid., p.70.
[72] Ibid., pp.76-77.
[73] Ibid., pp.82, 109.
[74] Horkheimer, M. 'The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Science', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings,* p.1.
[75] Ibid., p.5.
[76] Ibid., p.7.
[77] Jay, M. *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950,* p.31.

individual in the economy '… shapes the forms of character and consciousness'.[78] One can link the individual's character and consciousness to Horkheimer's later view that individuals produced (not only material goods) what others needed – a need that was inherent in the community – addressed through individual efforts to serve the individual's own welfare.[79] In a sense, the individual's interest was considered as less important to that of the collective – but, argued Horkheimer, this was a confused misunderstanding because materialistic theory and practice were not conducted correctly and therefore an alternative metaphysics needed to be adopted.[80] This view would later be explained more fully in his 1937 article 'Traditional and Critical Theory', but for now it '… stands also for a whole series of ideas and practical attitudes.'[81] But no individual well-being and attainment of an individual's destiny, was possible without the proper functioning of the intellect[82] and was no guarantee for an enlightened world. Human actions without reason gave rise to the '… greatest disasters in the course of history.' [83] Therefore, according to the intellect, or reason, that '… individuals belonging to a particular historical period, do indeed share certain psychological characteristics'[84] did not stand independent from the conviction that '… modern philosophical anthropology consists in finding a norm that will provide meaning to an individual's life.…'[85] However, it seemed as if the revere was achieved. The failed bourgeois revolution resulted in an individualistic society where '… joyful existence and universal equality longed for ...'[86] was an illusion. This underscored Horkheimer's view that a metaphysical abstraction of the individual, and separated from the rest of the world, forgot the individual's very dependence on social conditions of his real existence.[87]

Because of its comprehensiveness, Horkheimer's 'Rise and Decline of the Individual' – a public lecture (together with several others) which he delivered at Columbia University under the heading 'Society and Reason' in the spring of 1944,[88] is of particular interest for this article. Up to this point, Horkheimer's views about the individual did not receive direct attention nor in a comprehensive form by him, but 'Rise and Decline of the Individual'

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[78] Horkheimer, M. 'History and Psychology', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings,* p.121.
[79] Horkheimer, M. 'Materialism and Morality', Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings,* p.19.
[80] Horkheimer, M. *Critical Theory. Selected Essays,* pp.13-14, 17.
[81] Ibid., p.17.
[82] Horkheimer, M. 'The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings,* p.220.
[83] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence,* p.28.
[84] Horkheimer, M. 'Remarks on Philosophical Anthropology', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings,* p.151.
[85] Ibid., p.155.
[86] Horkheimer, M. 'Egoism and freedom Movements: On the Anthropology of the Bourgeois Era', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings,* p.62.
[87] Horkheimer, M. *Critical Theory. Selected Essays,* p.17, 200.
[88] Horkheimer, M. *Eclipse of Reason* ('Preface'), p.(vi).

changed this position. Despite the Frankfurt School being criticized for its alleged historical deficit,[89] Horkheimer had a definite historical approach to his treatment of the individual – in fact, Horkheimer's work was generally deeply imbedded in the tradition of history. Firstly, in 'Rise and Decline….' he wrote that the '… story of the individual […] is still largely unwritten …'[90] and he outlined the history of the individual's emergence from the times of the Greek hero in the Aristotelian polis. The hero as an individual was bold, self-reliant, emancipated from tradition, and the tribe.[91] His well-being was closely connected to the conditions of urban life. Horkheimer also referred to Plato's times when '… objective rather than subjective or formalized reason …' dealt with individual liberty and interests of the community through the tenuous relationship between theory and practice.[92] Then, according to Horkheimer, Socrates was the first to '… affirm explicitly the autonomy of the individual.'[93] Socrates's abstract idea of the individual began when he '… think of himself – as opposed to outward reality – as the highest of all ideals.'[94] During the Middle Ages the free burger came into existence after the influences of the Gothic invasions were undone.[95] But with the emergence of the Christian individual, life on earth was merely an interim state. Self-preservation was realized in the eternal soul, thus we found the mortal individual, but with an immortal soul.[96] This meant that the rise of the individual took place '… when society began to lose its cohesiveness and he became aware of the differences between his life and that of the seemingly eternal collectivity.'[97] In this way, the Church spread its influence over man's inner life thereby making the individual subject to God. This metaphysical individual had different relationships by the time when the dawn of the era of free enterprise set in – thus, the advent of bourgeois capitalism – or '… the so-called era of individualism ...',[98] arrived. For the bourgeois individual, there was no tension between himself and the collective – he practiced self-preservation '… through the unrestricted competition of individual interests'. [99] Liberalism was just that – to take care of own the individual's material interests. Such concerns resulted in human individuality losing its economic foundation since the concerns of big business are predominant. Therefore, for the submissive individual, there was no longer scope for self-actualisation because he was absorbed into various organisations. The individual has been dissolved and was controlled by the agencies of capital. For instance, the

[89] Bottomore, T. *The Frankfurt School,* pp.9, 81.
[90] Horkheimer, M. *Eclipse of Reason,* p.88.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., p.90.
[93] Ibid., p.91.
[94] Ibid., p.92.
[95] Horkheimer. M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969,* p.124.
[96] Horkheimer, M. *Eclipse of Reason,* p.93.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., p.94.
[99] Ibid.

workers were managed by the business of labour organisations – their interests had been taken over by the leaders (managers) of the labour unions – hence they were subject to the industrial system. Therefore, any form of collectivism that negated individualism, was, according to Horkheimer, a fall-back to a previous stage of development – a position worse than that of liberalism.[100] Horkheimer's discussion constantly built up to his views about the '… present time'.[101]

Characteristically of the mid-1940s, labour and capital continued to increase its hold on society. Although some argued that this was as a result of technological advancement, Horkheimer argued to the contrary on this point. He wrote: 'It is not technology or the motive of self-preservation that in itself accounts for the decline of the individual […] but the forms in which it takes place – the interrelationships of human beings within the specific framework of industrialism.'[102] The relationships were the result of '… the present structure and content of the 'objective mind'….'[103] This meant that the emphasis shifted away from the pure material conditions, to rationality[104] – therefore, Horkheimer was concerned about '… the dwindling away of individual thinking….'[105] This did not negate the precarious material position of the individual as a result of recently acquired enormous industrial power that was '… in process of liquidating the individual….'[106] Economically speaking, the individual was insecure and subjected to mass society's capacities that exhausted individual existence. Horkheimer ended by writing: 'The real individuals of our time are the martyrs who have gone through infernos of suffering and degradation in their resistance to conquest and oppression, not the inflated personalities of popular culture….'[107] This narrow view of the individual, is not meant to be restricted to the sufferers of Hitlerism.

By 1956, Horkheimer was pessimistic about the state's influence on the individual. He felt that freedom to speak and write was eroded to a level lower than that of a hundred years before. Because of the lack of freedom of speech, individuals actually had nothing to say to one another. This problem went to the heart of the concept of the individual – the existence of man equalled that of the individual. Small wonder, Horkheimer also wrote that the sovereignty of the individual and of the nation was something of the past[108] and one needed to come to grips with it on a philosophical level.[109] Critical conception of man, for instance, held

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[100] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence,* p.52.
[101] Horkheimer, M. *Eclipse of Reason,* p.102.
[102] Ibid., pp.103-104.
[103] Ibid., p.104.
[104] Ibid., pp.104-105.
[105] Ibid., p.105.
[106] Ibid., p.106.
[107] Ibid., p.109.
[108] Horkheimer. M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969*, pp.128-129, 135, 160.
[109] Horkheimer, M. 'The Concept of Man', in Horkheimer, M. *Critique of Instrumental Reason.*

that the individual was also a spiritual being that surpassed social stratification, class, country or age. But because of the interconnection between the individual and society, and their reciprocal influences on each other, this did not mean that one could escape physical or emotional suffering.[110] There were certain reasons for this: population growth; automated technology; centralisation of economic and political power; and increased rationality of the individual gave rise to the organisation and manipulation of the individual – at the expense of his spontaneity and self-awareness.[111] The human being was withering away: he came in contact with others that he did not even know; individualistic entrepreneurship was diminishing, education has lost its value[112] and he became a mere vehicle of the controlling social mechanisms of life.[113]

The controlled life in which the individual found himself had a historical element to it. The rise of monopolistic capitalism and the out-datedness of liberalism placed a bourgeois culture in its place. Such culture '… adds the individual and the social, the general and the particular. According to it, the individual is himself plus a historical, supra-individual one, plus influences of the world in general.'[114] Fascism for instance, repudiated the individual, denied individual autonomy, and resulted in collectivism in the East – both were instances of individual regression and how human spirit had been nullified.[115]

It is the self-contradictory nature of economic laws that made the world bigger and smaller at the same time – bigger in terms of big business, but smaller in terms of devaluing the 'little people' in the process – in other words, the 'bigger' was dependent on the 'smaller' individual. Herein vests the injustices of the so-called developed civilised society. In mass society, the individual has lost his/her autonomy without any guarantees of a harmonious relationship with the collective.[116] In fact, the individual's freedom was threatened. His freedom is not something unconditional but in close relationship with the given real-life situation. 'Progress' through science, for instance, was no guarantee for freedom. Instead, struggle against the power relations of democracy was symptomatic of regression rather than progress, and therefore Horkheimer was pessimistic about the prospects for '… further development of freedom.'[117] He gave the following themes as examples of a negative

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Lectures and Essays Since the End of World War II, p.1.

[110] Ibid., pp.5-7, 9.

[111] Ibid., pp.4, 10, 12.

[112] Ibid., pp.11, 13, 23, 33.

[113] Horkheimer, M. 'The Individual and Society', in Horkheimer, M. *Critique of Instrumental Reason. Lectures and Essays Since the End of World War II*, p.147. See also Horkheimer. M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969*, p.197.

[114] Horkheimer. M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969*, pp.168, 170.

[115] Ibid., pp.171-172.

[116] Ibid., pp.203-203, 227.

[117] Horkheimer, M. 'Threats to Freedom', in Horkheimer, M. *Critique of Instrumental Reason. Lectures and Essays Since the End of World War II*, p.140.

situation: mass media; the regulation of human relations; how words (language) are used; the current status of education; the role of religion in society; academic professions; medicine, and discretionary time. Regression was prevalent in all spheres of life: the economy; family life; politics and every-day life. There was a definitive move from the individual to the collective through cliques; professional groupings; political parties; religious conformism, and the nation. The individual gave way to a corporate mentality.[118] In an aphorism that he wrote late in his life, Horkheimer said that the individual was becoming '… less and less of a person….[119]

For them, human society suffered from false enlightenment because the myths previously addressed by reason, gave way to a new kind of myth – *viz.* the myth that we think we are intelligent. We think we are cleaver, but in an age of two world wars, where ideological and capitalist domination prevails, we still did not succeed at arriving at "true" *enlightenment*. As a result, we suffer from a false sense of clarity about life – and the misconception that modern social progress did away with all manifestations of human enslavement, cannot be upheld. Instead, we continue to live in an unjust society where *enlightenment* is subjected to ideology – the very thing that enlightenment was to eradicate. The result is humankind's inability to reverse theoretical and practical tendencies that perpetuate its self-destruction.

In reality, mankind's modern achievements fell far short of the *enlightenment* ideals of the 17th and 18th centuries. *Enlightenment* then, set out to achieve human advancement through thought, and aimed at liberating human beings from all forms of fear. Instead, today, the world remains full of misfortune. Transposed to modern day Eastern Cape historiography, one can relate to contemporary problems of e.g. wide-scale poverty; unemployment; environmental degradation; governmental fraud and corruption; and neo-domination of society that are still today incongruent to the true *enlightenment* ideals.

These examples testify to the many obstacles that humans were unable to use their knowledge for the *true* improvement of their contemporary condition.[120] The *enlightenment* ideals and the partial achievement thereof today, did not clear the human mind from all sorts of superstition. Our modern-day knowledge is merely deployed as a different form of power – even new forms of spatial domination, still prevails.

Formal logic – the driver of human societal advancement, became a tool to calculate the world, and out of such, new forms of myths emerged. For instance, the use of modern language, as taught by the Enlightenment priests, that were supposed to assist with the process towards emancipation and self-understanding, became the very instrument in human

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[118] Ibid., pp.140-149, 156-157.
[119] Horkheimer. M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969*, p. 234.
[120] See for instance Maxwell, N. *From Knowledge to Wisdom. A Revolution in the Aims and Methods of Science.*

domination. At first, language was only a set of symbols, but in true enlightened sense, language is more than that. Nevertheless, when misappropriated, language instead became a tool of power and hegemonic domination.

The injustices designed from so-called empirical facts[121] made the human mind in reality the instrument of power through which the world was supposed to be transformed into industry – this did not necessarily happen for the better. The result was an industry culture effecting (and infecting) life in its totality. We have a false identity of the universal and particular, e.g. film and radio became ideology that produces and perpetuates standardization and mass production in a mass culture. The result is that mechanically different products are in their final analysis, identical – even leisure time is orientated towards the objectives of capitalist mass production. This is not what real humankind is and does not make them enlightened.

In view of the above, we still face obstacles in the way of humanity that was, as a result, unable to use knowledge for the betterment of their daily conditions and therefore we have no true *enlightenment* to speak of. We have been misled by the many products of reason into a false understanding of what *enlightenment* is – one that produces and controls the masses. The transformation of cultural products into commodities reduces culture to the status of conformist, repetitive, worthless things, whose function is to ensure political tranquillity – the benefits of which do not trickle down to the lowest levels of civic life. Our neo-enslavement, domination and even notions of *enlightenment*, merely took on new forms. Consequently, any form of neo-barbarism, compromises our beliefs about *enlightenment* – as is experienced in mass society.

There is however, a limit to mythological (apparent) *enlightenment*. For instance, when others consider one group of people as an anti-race, simply because of the former's different beliefs and traditions, then such is no longer congruent with 'true' *enlightenment* ideals. Firstly, there is the urge to destroy differences and in doing so, action becomes a purpose in itself. Secondly, the purpose of human rights is to enshrine human happiness even when power is lacking. Under such circumstances, the cheated masses constantly repress their thoughts of potential happiness because the idea of happiness without power is not possible. Thirdly, the same hold true when one group is singled out for all the prevailing economic injustices. In this sense, they are precluded from being allowed untroubled ownership of their civic rights. Hostility to religious practices is an example of the mythological alliance between alleged *enlightenment* and a power disposition that has debarred the 'true' consciousness of religion.

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[121] Engelbrecht, C. 'Limitations in History.' Part II. 'Theory and Eastern Cape Historical Research.' <independent.academia.edu.christoenapers> Posted on 26 December 2012, pp.1-12.

Conclusion

The challenge now remains to determine how the above discussion can be applied to South African historiography – after all, Legassick reminded us how early South African historiography of e.g. Theal and Cory respectively '... presented history of benevolent conquest and rule over the black barbarian (''the Other")…."[122] The imbalances in South African historiography are well-known – some has argued that such were 'abnormal histories of (in) an abnormal society.' In order to rectify the situation, Visser said that '[o]ne of the most serious weaknesses in the present [2004] state of South African historiography is that even well into a decade of epoch-making changes since 1994, a generally authoritative history of South Africa with a distinctly Africanist point of view has yet to appear.'[123] This is surprising because how would such authoritative history escape the very same criticisms that '… British imperialist, a settler or colonist, an Afrikaner nationalist, a liberal and a revisionist or radical school …'[124] had to endear?

Enlightenment and the Enlightenment are defined in various ways. One such perspective is that of C. Siskin and W. Warren who claimed that *enlightenment* is everything that intervenes.[125] This view has several shortcomings – the most obvious is that e.g. corruption plays a negative interventative role in the normal course of the daily lives of all ordinary citizens. Such 'intervention' is counter-enlightened and is symptomatic of an attitude of '... taking-for-grantedness…'[126] the vast opportunities (in government or corporate life) for self-enrichment but that results in eroding the rights of the individual. Another view is that the Enlightenment can be reduced to life in a democracy with e.g. racial and sexual equality; individual liberty and lifestyle; freedom of thought, expression and press; and separation of church and state.[127] The clear problem is that the South African philosophy of democracy, political governance, and authoritative implementations of the governing ideology, show up a

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[122] Legassick, M. *The Struggle for the Eastern Cape 1800-185: Subjugation and the Roots of South African Democracy,* pp.1, 12.

[123] Visser, W. 'Trends in South African Historiography and the Present State of Historical Research.' (Unpublished paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 23 September 2004), p.16

[124] Ibid., p.1.

[125] Siskin, C. and W. Warren *This is Enlightenment.*

[126] Engelbrecht, C. 'The Politicking of Space and a Local Museum.' <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> Posted on 22 August 2013. [Accessed on 20 April 2014], p.2.

[127] Moyn, S. 'Mind the Enlightenment.' <www.thenation.com/article/mind-enli> Posted on 12 May 2010.

paradoxical democracy deficit. The current disillusionment in the public domain with the outputs of democracy, are widely documented and discussed in contemporary South Africa. Another form of intervention is e.g. the role of education. For instance, conventional political theory held that the higher the level of education, the better the chances of the establishment of a democratic society, yet the reverse seems the outcome. Apathy and the betrayal of public trust and the ideals of the constitution, are general characteristics of an un-enlightened civic life. At grassroots level, observers comment that pre-1994 South Africa, so well-known to the world for all the wrong reasons, are duplicating that, but now, for different un-*enlightened* reasons. Horkheimer clearly warned against this. He wrote: 'Morality is disappearing. It […] is now being replaced by the increasing scope of social and governmental directives.'[128]

At the centre of *enlightenment* is supposed human freedom based on reason – meaning, the freedom to choose freely between alternatives.[129] In hindsight, a history of our society reveals that our reason failed us in 'true' *enlightenment* tradition. One such alternative that arises from an incompatibility (real or apparent) between sets of beliefs – none of which we are prepared to abandon, remains the desire for sustainable freedom. South African history exemplifies the historical choices South Africans made – the lack of freedom for parts of the population, it was argued herein, contributed to the fall of the South African society into its own forms of barbarism. Rational choices were made to deliberately perpetuate lack of freedom – not only political freedom for black South Africans, and most certainly not only leading up to 1994. That is, essentially, how we managed our politics of space.[130] But the relationship between e.g. 'freedom' and poverty in post-1994 South Africa needs to be re-researched since there seem to be contradictory hopes and expectations in our 2014 society. The argument is that freedom and poverty are not considered to be mutually exclusive. The longing for universal suffrage and rhetoric of free and fair elections hardly constitute an enlightened democracy. Similarly, the ANC's historical yearning for the seizure of power has resulted in a clearly un-*enlightened* society. Alex Boraine recently dealt convincingly with the main issues that pertain to current South Africa – as a state on the 'brink of failing.'[131]

Civic life, at the height of the apartheid era, perpetuated lack of freedom for many, forced a military life onto Others, and accommodated ideological tendencies of the political far right that seemed not dissimilar to aspects of National Socialism. Furthermore, prisoners continue to die at the hands of the police, or the military – the very institutions that are supposed to protect all citizens from our own unique forms of barbarism and 'un-freedom'. Many, (if not

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[128] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969,* p.160.
[129] Engelbrecht, C. 'Early Critical Theory, Racket Theory, and the Arms Deal for South Africa.' <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> Posted on 29 June 2013, pp.1-59.
[130] Engelbrecht, C. 'The Politics of Space and Notes on a Gated Community in South Africa.' <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> Posted on 13 February 2014, pp.1-17.
[131] Boraine, A. *What's Gone Wrong? On the Brink of a Failed State.*

all) of the issues raised by Critical Theory (in the introduction above), are also to some extent present in current South African history. Probably the most contemporary, are realities surrounding e.g. xenophobia brutalities during 2009 and 2010. In addition, fraud for instance, said Pravin Gordhan (the outgoing minister of finance in his last budget speech in parliament in March 2014), '… has now taken root …' in our society. Research in racketeering in South Africa remains a hardly researched topic.[132]

The reality is that our so-called 'enlightened' neo-social post-1994 societal engineering resulted in new kinds of myth – for instance, the myth that a prosperous society is achieved for all South Africans – and that it is sustainable. This new society, it is argued, debased the exclusiveness of self-determination (*selfbeskikking)*, separate development *(afsonderlike ontwikkeling)* or plural development previously experimented with is South Africa. But true *enlightenment*, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, meant more than just freedom from the above. At best, our history has clearly shown that such concepts are a contradiction in terms, and that it stems from our current inability to reverse the forces of self-destruction to the extent that we talk rightly and wrongly, of a so-called 'new' South Africa. It is this belief that perpetuates a new kind of myth in the Rainbow Nation. Critical Theory is littered with its critique of examples of irrationalism and deception and such make it relevant for our purposes.

Given the time when Horkeimer and Adorno wrote their book, it is not surprising that the reality of fear[133] came up constantly in contemporary writings of the Frankfurt School. Fear is such an innate human trait that the concept *enlightenment* is appropriate for an analysis of aspects of thereof in our society. A few cryptic suggestions will conceptualize possible research links.

Resistance, armed conflict and destruction (regardless of its sophistication, level of intensity, or scope) have been integral parts of South African society form the very beginning of first multi-cultural contact - even before European contact with the southern tip of Africa. After all, from the outset, our first contact experiences were rather controversial. Contested space shaped our interpretation thereof over many generations and our diverse historiographical outputs confirm this.[134] In fact, comprehensive and ambitions historical research is necessary to determine if South Africans are by nature a quarrelling nation across the spectrum of methods deployed. The first histories about the Van Riebeeck era included aspects of conflict in one form or another, in their findings. In 1969 (and to take examples by

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[132] Engelbrecht, C. 'Early Critical Theory, Racket Theory, and the Arms Deal for South Africa.' <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> Posted on 29 June 2013, pp.1-59.

[133] Adorno, T. *In Search of Wagner,* p.145.

[134] Saunders, C. *The Making of the South African Past. Major Historians on Race and Class;* Smith, K. *The Changing Past. Trends in South African Historical Writing;* Wright, H. *The Burden of the Present. Liberal-Radical Controversy over Southern African History.*

referring to South African frontier history), Monica Wilson wrote that '[t]he basic fact of frontier history is the conflict between black and white over the occupation of land.'[135] Giliomee similarly referred to the frontier history '… as a stark conflict'.[136] Historians refer to the so-called Hundred Years War when they study conflict on the frontiers from the earliest times to late into the second half of the 19th century. In fact, the earlier period of Dutch rule characterised many varieties of conflict, as did subsequent periods of British rule and after unification to 1994. The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 was probably the high point of military activity in South Africa. Soon, South Africa participated in WW I, then WW II, after colonisation in the Rhodesian War, Angolan War, Mozambiquan War and our own protracted internal armed freedom struggle. Modern critics argue that the pre-1994 armed struggle has not disappeared from our society – only new forms of conflict developed that escalated in numerous spheres of society with limited prospects of real containment. Therefore, the argument goes, it is the nature of conflict (struggles) that has changed.

Ideological domination varied from colonial capitalism, to dispossession of land and other means of hegemonic existence, e.g. extreme forms of Africanerization of society, to ANC-formulated social engineering allegedly for the good of 'all' South Africans, when in reality, it is not the case. The point is that well into the 'new' (or post-1994 society) society, ANC-policies do not deliver on their pre- and post-1994 electoral promises. Preliminarily empirical research regarding the lack of social service delivery is one case in point[137] – the issues surrounding non-delivery are no longer a popular political public sphere debate, but a historical reality. At this point in time all political parties have included aspects thereof in their political campaigns for the national elections on 7 May 2014.

Post-1994 mass communication and subsequent new forms of loss of human identity and dignity are widespread in modern South African history. The history of the South African press (at some points in history more government-controlled than at others) reflects new forms of a false sense of press freedom and thus compromises the real views of *enlightenment.* The politics of language that pertain e.g. to protests against forced use of Afrikaans in black schools, are well documented. In essence, the insistence on Afrikaans as language of instruction for black pupils is generally accepted as the immediate cause of the Soweto riots of June 1976. The police massacre of rioting protestors as recently as the Lonmin case in 2103, has different and mainly institutional origins. The secondary effect was that both acted as detonators for multiple other grievances.

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[135] Wilson, M. 'Co-operation and Conflict: The Eastern Cape Frontier', in Thomson, L. and M. Wilson (eds.) *The Oxford History of South Africa,* Vol. I, *South Africa to 1870,* p.268.
[136] Giliomee, H. 'The Eastern Cape Frontier, 1770-1812', in Elphick, R. and H. Giliomee (eds.) *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1820,* p.326.
[137] Legassick, M. *Towards Socialist Democracy,* pp.502 – 506.

At various periods in South African history, economic calamity was a real source of fear amongst all in society. The consequences of the Great Depression, the inflation crisis of the 1970s, the oil crisis of the 1980s, disinvestment and sanctions, embargos, as is the current state of the world economy,[138] are historical realities that are incongruent with *enlightenment* ideals as set out above.

The historical (and current) disillusionment with democracy represents logic and reason that has in many instances failed our society by 2014. A not too farfetched example is the rude reality of the shortcomings of the 1820 Settler scheme. Closer to our times, are the absurd shortcomings of e.g. RDP housing to the underprivileged in post-1994 South Africa. Generally, the lack of service delivery[139] and disillusionment with democratic institutions are not only based on incompetence and ineptitude of officialdom, but is closely related to, and in fact not to be separated from, capitalistic greed and self-gain at the hands of the 'governing' elite. There is a seamless relationship between these two variables in current South African society. Although this is not the place to discuss the democracy deficit, it remains important to recognize the diminishing voter turnout as '… a nearly universal phenomenon in the industrialized world.'[140] Horkheimer was clear about democracy being its self-devouring own enemy.[141]

Self-interest portrayed many nuances in our history - from missionaries, early Dutch governmental officials up to and including our current 2011 situation. These exemplify the concept of new myths of democratic freedom. Again, corruption and various forms of misappropriation of public monies, date back to the first ten years of the VOC, and frequently thereafter. The same holds for the inability of officials in government and entrepreneurs in private business, to deliver on their promises to their respective constituents and citizenry at large. Old orthodoxies, allegedly to be replaced by 'new' *enlightenment*, goes the repeated promises, seem to become 'old' in their 'newness' before an eye can be blinked. This stupidity of cleverness perpetuates the shortcomings of the understudied phenomena of the lack of *enlightenment* in our historiography of not only grassroots South Africans.

It is logic (and reasonable) that new forces of authority were developed in South Africa as the various colonial authorities expanded their colonial rule and juridical legitimacy. No society can function without institutions of law and order, and the historical development of

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[138] Webb, A. 'Booms and Crashes: What Lessons Can We Learn From a Study of the Past?' (E. Morse-Jones Memorial Lecture delivered on 20 August 2009 to the Lower Albany Historical Society), in *Toposcope,* Vol.xli, 2010, pp.54-62.

[139] Mc Lennan, A. and B. Munslow. *The Politics of Service Delivery.*

[140] Hill, L. and J. Louth, 'Compulsory Voting Laws and Turnout: Efficacy and Appropriations', <http://www.academia.edu/703084/Compulsory_voting_laws_ and_turnout-efficacy_and_appropriateness> Refereed paper presented to the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference. University of Adelaide, 29 September – 1 October 2004, p.4.

[141] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn and Decline. Notes 1926-1931*and *1950-1969,* p.234.

e.g. *landdroste, heemrade, veldkornette, veldwagmeesters*, and magistrates during times of colonial rule, testify to the desire and need to develop, maintain and extend governmental rule. In *enlightenment* terms, the problem arises when organs of authority are misappropriated. Reason serves as 'a universal tool for the fabrication of all other tools'.[142]
In the most extreme form however, security measures of the 1980s stemmed from numerous security organs developed to uphold the law, but failed in many respects, to ensure order. New forces of authority developed into neo-forces of money politics and moneycrats – meaning the seamless influence of bureaucrats who have success through dubious means to taxpayers' money, for self-gain and self-interest. This long and deep rooted tradition in South African society needs thorough historical research since the democratic state as an institution is threatened because the civil consequences are out of line with enlightened ideals. The influences thereof on neo-domination needs re-conceptualisation. A practical example is the current state of trade unionism in South Africa. Cryptic comment will suffice.

The widely publicised debate in the public domain covers the scope of how traditional trade unions (pre-1994) have since, strategically aligned themselves with money making opportunities for self-gain in relation to government. This anti-enlightenment position has sacrificed the ideals for which also the poor fought (struggled) in South Africa. In this process, the trade unions '… became arrogant, big-headed and displayed authoritarian tendencies'.[143] Today they are political formations closely aligned to moneycrats who '… have squandered the goodwill and moral authority that they used to enjoy among the working class and other sections of society'.[144] Essentially, new economic elite has arrived in post-apartheid South Africa and its definition is not as restricted as that of Böröcz and Róna-Tas – but, to rather include government employees as well.[145] This order represents a consensual understanding of a new self-interest. Its rhetoric on the logic of sameness – is the logic of capital, and of becoming-the-same. New imperial regimes of consensus building founded and funded on the intimate possibility of a sense of belonging.

Our history is well-recorded that mainly for black South Africans and many opposing whites, the ideals of greater human confidence and optimism in society, diminished over many decades, if not centuries, because many lost their ability and instruments to control their lives and their natural world. More than one leading up to 1994, were severe state of emergency measures implemented – they curtailed human freedom at all levels and negated the principles of participative *enlightenment*. They were always rationalized as necessary

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[142] Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* p.23.
[143] Buhlungu, S. 'Crisis-ridden unions have to reinvent themselves', in *The Mercury. Business Report,* p.16.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Bórócz, J. and A. Róna-Tas. 'Small Leap Forward: Emergence a New Economic Elite', in *Theory and Society,* Vol.24, No.5, October 1995, pp.751-781. (Special issue on Circulation vs Reproduction of Elite During Postcommunist Transformation of Eastern Europe.)

measures to defend civic society. Morality is deeply imbedded in culture. The prevailing culture is one based on various internal and external influences (good or bad) and adaptations. Its ideas, beliefs, traditions, daily human practices and methodologies, set the tone for the future.[146] These influences impact on the future consequences of diffusion such as the increasing global spread; the substantial invasion of social and cultural interactions to the extent that a shared cultural context can overcome the local – the result is what Alderman termed 'glocialization' – the process of combining the local and global.[147] It has recently been argued that the ANC has lost its moral compass.[148] The eroding of old orthodoxies, are thus not necessarily representative of being enlightened – the façade of post-1994 'raceless' South African society is one such theme.

Such a point in South African history represents an anti-enlightened state of affairs, specifically when measured against Habermas's view that in the democratic state the true process of enlightenment, "there can only be participants."[149] This is not possible when extreme reasoning results in radical industrial and social dominance. This dominance is the result of enforced and reinforced capitalist ethos of state controlled culture industry.[150]

It was difficult, and at times impossible (let alone unlawful), to question old orthodoxies of social engineering in South Africa. One simplistic example is when Legassick was prohibited from delivering the T. B. Davie Academic Freedom Memorial Lecture at the University of Cape Town in 1979. In fact, for more than two decades, many radical South African academics left the country in exile because the lack of freedom of expression and association made circumstances intolerable. But, in the 'new' South Africa, there is evidence that new forms of intolerance regarding the questioning of our democracy, cannot be wished away. The standard response is castigating those who question, as 'still living in the old South Africa.'

Our ability to arrive at *enlightened* independent personal conclusions, were well controlled by state intervention – freedom of speech, movement, association etc. were for years curtailed by legislative restrictions and thus compromised basic human rights. Under such circumstances, it is understandable that human happiness and the good of human nature were drastically curtailed, specifically if happiness per definition incorporates the good of others

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[146] Alderman, D.H. 'Cultural Change and Diffusion. Geographic Patters, Social Processes, and Contact Zones.' ' <https//www.academia.edu/1492339/Cultural_Change_and_Diffusion-Geographical –Patterns_Social_Processes_and_Contact_Zones>

[147] Ibid., pp.132-134.

[148] Engelbrecht, C. 'Early Critical Theory, Racket Theory, and the Arms Deal for South Africa.' <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> Posted on 29 June 2013. [Accessed on 19 March 2014], p.(vii).

[149] Habermas, J. *Theory and Practice*, p.40.

[150] Grant, B. 'Implications for the Television Industry: An Examination of The Culture Industry Thesis.' <http://barneygrant.tripod.com/cultureindustry.htm>

into one's own ends. The history of the destructive impact "homeland" living on family structures, testifies to at least the lack of human happiness.

The attitudes of the educated minority dominated society from the beginning to the extent that even today, the shortcomings thereof are under constant review. Most recently are the Grade 12 final year examination results that were upwardly adjusted to balance the relative results between state and private schools. Such political decisions create and perpetuate new myths regarding the true reflection of student examination results, and are *anti-enlightened* in spirit.

Historically, regional power politics has always been inextricably linked to South Africa's foreign policy. It is common knowledge that South Africa is still regarded as a regional superpower.[151] With extensive military involvements for decades in Rhodesia, Angola, Botswana and Mozambique, South Africa had close relations with the front-line states in an effort to contain the myth of a Marxist 'total onslaught' against the Republic. The current South African military involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo seems out of line with *enlightenment* ideals of e.g. eradicating poverty. A last example will suffice. South Africa's membership with the other Brics (Russia, Brazil, India and China) gives support to the '… central geopolitical aim […] to replace what it regards as the current ''unipolar'' world order, dominated by the US and its Western allies, with a ''multipolar'' order in which power will be distributed more equally across the globe'.[152] In this neo-spacial world, government needs to re-conceptualise ideologies for reasons of legitimacy – the result is that it impacts on conventional wisdoms of intellectual history as being the exclusive domain of Western thought. This process is channelled through influencing public logic in order to govern the behaviour of the citizenry. It takes place against the highroad of contesting e.g. the IMF and World Bank's interests and alliances, but fraud, corruption, and lack of service delivery in the domestic lives of the average South African citizen[153] remains uppermost in the public domain.

In postmodernist tradition, it appears as if the *enlightenment* project of the 'most liberal constitution in the world' (as ours has previously been perceived) has failed South Africa.[154] It is therefore questionable if the concept progress and its associations to quantitative change in a definite known direction, can today be sensibly compared to yesterday, and whether a class orientated sociology of knowledge is still of any relevance[155] in the South African situation.

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[151] Welsh, F. *A History of South Africa,* p.(xx).

[152] Fabricius, P. 'Russia's Tactics Pose a Danger to Brics', in *The Mercury,* 14 March 2014, p.9. See Also Barr, M. *Who's Afraid of China? The Challenge of Chinese Soft Power.*

[153] Cokayne, R. 'Guilty firms to help overhall sector', in *The Mercury. Business Report,* 14 March 2014, p.15.

[154] Alex Borain's new book's subtitle refers to a state on the brink of failing.

[155] Böröcz, J. 'Social Change with Sticky Features and the Future of Modernizationism', in *Innovation,* Vol.10, No.2, June 1997, p161.

The historian's work is (in view of the above analysis of *enlightenment*), similar to that of a librarian's: incomplete, as the results of rewritten (re-writing) South African history, have not proven the contrary (and is unlikely to do so). Therefore, our personal, scientific and public life, remains incomplete and barbaric in enlightened terms. Just two years ago, S. Thorton wrote: 'While economic progression and social equality efforts were applauded in the first ten years post-apartheid, the citizens of South Africa are now caught in a battle for life.'[156] Certainly, this cannot be indicative of an enlightened society.

But, history as critical social theory = '… a redistributive project …' + one that '… disrupt[s] the canon….'[157] In this sense, the re-directing of society not only supersedes the '… immoral act of doing nothing ….' but instead, also requires to bring about '… a morally more acceptable and geopolitically wise society.…'[158] After all, in the words of Horkheimer: '… I have attacked enlightenment in the spirit of enlightenment….' [159] because (also in South Africa) domination '… was taking increasingly direct, noneconomic forms.'[160] One form of non-economic domination, is how language is used by the power elite[161] to justify their ideological beliefs as expressed in their election manifestos but experienced as myth by the electorate. Mythical misleading represents a form of un-*enlightenedness.*

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[156] Thorton, S. 'South Africa's Healthcare Crisis in the Eastern Cape.' <http://pulitzercenter.org/projects/south-africa-health-care-injustice-economy-sexual-violence-maternal-deaths> Posted on 14 December 2012.

[157] Hanley, W. 'Statelessness: An Invisible Theme in the History of International Law.' <ejil.oxfordjournals.org/content/25/1/321.full?keytype=ref&.jkey=YOlytPP1KNqlBzl> 2104.

[158] Böröcz, J. 'Redistributing Global Inequality. A Thought Experiment', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26 February 2005, pp.887-891.

[159] Schmidt, J. 'Language, Mythology, and Enlightenment: Historical Notes on Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of* Enlightenment.' <https//www.academia.edu/1492339/Cultural_Change_and_Diffusion-Geographical –Patterns_Social_Processes_and_Contact_Zones>, p.17.

[160] Jay, M. *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950*, p.256.

[161] Devrari, M.C. 'Language, Discourse and Ideology.' <https//cju.academia.edu/MukeshDevrari_ language_discource_and_ideology-libre.pdf>, p.4.

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